17. III. 1.

REPORT

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

UNION OF CHRISTIANS,

FORMED AT

BEDFORD.

LONDON:

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19
SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.C.1

N. B. The following Report is deſigned to afford, to all the Members of the Union, a View, and Record, of the Reſolutions paſſed at the General Meetings, and of the Exertions made to ſpread the Goſpel in the ſeveral Diſtricts. It appeared, therefore, neceſſary, to render it particular, and diſtinct; although a bare ſtatement of facts could, alone, be attempted. If intereſting circumſtances had been detailed, a large Volume would already have been produced. Nothing is inſerted, that is not underſtood to be within the actual Knowledge of the Committee; and, on this account, it is poſſible that ſome particulars in the Weſtern Diſtricts may have been omitted.

The Committee is aware, that this Report might have been rendered more complete, by inſerting a detail of the progreſs of the Goſpel by means of thoſe Miniſters, who live in the ſame Country, but who have not united. The motive for omitting every particular of this kind, as well as of the impediments which have occurred in the work, is merely, if it be poſſible, to avoid giving offence to any individual.

REPORT, &c.

I. *Proceedings at the first General Meeting at Bedford, 31st October, 1797.*

AT a conference held in the afternoon of that day, in the Old Meeting Houſe, Dr. W. Gordon in the Chair, it was unanimouſly reſolved:

I. That an Aſſociation of the Miniſters and Congregations in this County, and its Neighbourhood, is deſirable and expedient.

II. That the Object of ſuch an Aſſociation be to promote the knowledge of the Goſpel.

III. That all, without exception, whom we apprehend to love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity, be admiſſible as members.

IV. That the Miniſters and Members of religious Societies now preſent, declare themſelves, and each other, to be members of ſuch an Aſſociation, under the title of the *Union of Chriſtians*, framed at Bedford.

The Union was immediately conſtituted by the following Miniſters, and by members of their churches, and of ſome others, that were preſent, in all fifty perſons, who annexed their ſignatures.

W. BULL, Newport Pagnel, Bucks.
T. P. BULL, ditto.
T. BURKITT, ſecond Church, Bedford.
W. COLES, Maulden.
R. DAVIS, Thorn.
W. DICKINS, Keyſoe.
W. FREEMAN, Cardington Cotton End.

W. Gordon, d. d. St. Neots, Huntingdonshire.
S. Greatheed, Newport Pagnel, Bucks.
T. Hillyard, Olney.
S. Hillyard, first Church, Bedford.
Sir Egerton Leigh, Little Harborough, Warwickshire.

M. Mayle, Blunham.
J. Millard, Steventon.
J. Nicholls, Kimbolton, Huntingdonshire.
W. Pain, Gamlingay, Cambridgeshire.
T. Raban, Yardley, Northamptonshire.
J. Scroxton, } Woburn, Bedfordshire.
J. Tift, }
T. Wake, Leighton Buzzard.

Resolved, V. That all persons, who are already communicants in any religious Society, wherein satisfactory evidence of evangelical piety is required, in order to communion, be, upon their declaring a desire for union with us, regarded as Members.

VI. That all other persons, who may desire to be admitted to this Union, be received, if their Character be approved, as sincerely religious, by the Majority at any meeting of the Union, held in the neighbourhood where they reside.

(N. B. A distinction has since been made, by general agreement, in favour of persons who have regularly communicated in the Lord's Supper, at places where it is not customary to require the abovementioned evidence; that, if the Ministers, whom they statedly attend, be persons of approved evangelical piety, and recommend them to union with us, such a testimonial entitles them to admission as members.)

Resolved, VII. That those, only, who have been admitted as members of the Union, have a right to vote in its proceedings.

VIII. That the next General Meeting of this Union be held at Bedford, on Tuesday, 24th of

April next; on which occaſion the Rev. W. Bull be appointed to preach in the Forenoon, and the Rev. T. Wake in the Evening; or, in caſe of failure, the Rev. R. Davis, and the Rev. T. Hillyard.

IX. That the thanks of this Union be preſented to the Rev. S. Greatheed, for his diſcourſe preached here this forenoon, and that he be requeſted to publiſh it for the benefit of the Union, together with an account of the proceedings.

X. That the Rev. W. Bull be appointed *Preſident* of the Union; (which Mr. Bull declining, unleſs aſſiſtance ſhould be given him, it was reſolved) that the Rev. S. Greatheed be appointed *Vice-Preſident*.

XI. That the Rev. S. Hillyard be appointed *Secretary*, and Mr. John Foſter, of Biggleſwade, *Treaſurer*, of the Union.

XII. That the Members, now preſent, do, if convenient to them, make an immediate commencement of the neceſſary funds of the Union, by their ſubſcriptions.

(Purſuant to this Reſolution, the ſum of £.42 14ſ. was immediately ſubſcribed, and, in part, paid into the Treaſurer's hands.)

XIII. That it be recommended to the united Congregations, by the Miniſters preſent, to aſſiſt the Funds of the Union by one annual public collection in each.

XIV. That the Funds of this Union be applied to defray the expence that ſhall be incurred by preaching in Towns, Villages, or Hamlets, deſtitute of the Goſpel; or by other means of promoting Chriſtian Knowledge, within the limits of this Union; and if the Funds exceed what is neceſſary for theſe purpoſes, that the ſurplus be devoted to the ſpread of the Goſpel in the Britiſh Colonies, or among the Heathen.

XV. That the places within the preſent limits of this Union, be diſtributed into five diſtricts; in each of which the reſidents who have already united, together with others, whom they may aſſociate with themſelves for the purpoſe, ſhall conſtitute a Committee, for promoting the objects of the Union in their reſpective vicinities.

(1.) The *Central* Diſtrict to include the united members of the congregations at Bedford, Cardington, Cotton End, and Steventon.

(2.) The *North Eaſtern*—Keyſoe, Kimbolton, St. Neots.

(3.) The *South Eaſtern*—Blunham, Gamlingay, Biggleſwade, Hitchin.

(4.) The *South Weſtern*—Maulden, Woburn, Leighton, Thorn.

(5.) The *North Weſtern*—Newport Pagnel, Olney, Yardly.

XVI. That the Committees, in theſe diſtricts, ſhall meet at ſuch places and ſeaſons as circumſtances require; giving previous notice to the Secretary of the Union, ſufficiently early to admit of the attendance of one, or more of the Officers, at each of the Diſtrict Meetings.

(N. B. By a reſolution paſſed at the ſubſequent General Meeting, this laſt ſtep becomes no longer neceſſary.)

XVII. That the ſaid Committees ſhall appoint one, or more, of their Members, to correſpond with the Secretary, and to tranſmit to the Treaſurer the ſums they collect; with this reſerve, that they may at any time apply, if neceſſary, to promote the knowledge of the Goſpel in their own neighbourhood, a ſum equal to one-tenth part of the Funds actually in the poſſeſſion of the Treaſurer.

XVIII. That the travelling expenſes of the Officers, when attending Meetings in other diſtricts than thoſe where they reſide, be defrayed out of the general Fund.

(N. B.

(N. B. There appearing ſome difference of ſentiment upon this Motion, the queſtion was put, and carried by a majority, in the proportion of four to one. It is dependent upon the 16th Reſolution.)

XIX. That we hereby declare our readineſs to unite, ſo far as it may appear practicable and mutually expedient, with all Miniſters of the Goſpel, Chriſtian Societies, (of the deſcription given in the 5th Reſolution) and perſons of approved piety, whereſoever ſituated.

XX. That communication be opened, and correſpondence maintained, with other religious Aſſociations, inſtituted for ſimilar purpoſes, whenſoever it ſhall appear expedient to the Officers of the Union; and that Sir Egerton Leigh be requeſted to impart to the Miniſters with whom he ſtands connected, the proceedings of this day.

In the evening, at the ſecond Meeting Houſe, public worſhip was reſumed. The Rev. W. Dickins preached on Hebrews xiii. 16. The Rev. W. Bull, ſen. and the Rev. R. Davis, engaged in prayer.

II. *Proceedings in the ſeveral Diſtricts, &c.*

IN conſequence of the preceding arrangements, a Meeting was held in the SOUTH WEST Diſtrict, at Woburn, on the 9th of November; at which the Rev. T. Wake was choſen Secretary, and Mr. R. Carey, of Woburn, Treaſurer, for that Diſtrict. Meetings were afterward held at each of the other places in the Diſtrict, including RIDGEMOUNT; at which place the Church deſired to be united with us, although, being deſtitute of a Paſtor, they are incapable at preſent of taking an active part in our meaſures. The Rev. W. Pinnock, of FENNY STRATFORD, alſo joined the Union.

Mr. Coles, Paſtor of the Church at MAULDEN near *AMPTHILL*, had, a ſhort time before the formation of the Union, fitted up for public worſhip a part of his premiſſes at the latter place; which, although a Market Town, had before been unprovided with evangelical inſtruction, excepting once in a fortnight, on a week day, by Methodiſt Miniſters. A Lord's Day Evening Lecture has ſince been conſtantly preached at Mr. Coles's, chiefly ſupported by a ſucceſſion of Miniſters from various parts of the Union, and very fully attended. Members of the Union, in Mr. Coles's congregation, have, ſince the Union was formed, conducted Meetings for prayer and reading ſermons, in the neighbouring villages of *Milbrook* and *Flitwick*; and have obtained an entrance for the Goſpel in the neighbourhood of *Clophill* and *Silſoe*.

From the Church, formed eight years before, at WOBURN, the Goſpel had recently been introduced into ſome Villages a few miles diſtant, by the exertions of the Rev. J. Scroxton, then reſident Miniſter at Woburn, Mr. R. Carey, Deacon of the Church there, and the Rev. W. Tiſt, who dwells in the town, and is not ſtatedly connected with any Church.

After the Union was formed, their exertions increaſed; and although Mr. Scroxton has removed, there continues to be preaching ſtatedly, from Woburn, once each fortnight, or oftener, at the Villages of *Milton Bryant*, *Everſholt*, *Steppingley*, and *Little Brickhill*; and the Hamlets of *Sheeplane*, in Potſgrove pariſh, and *Long Slade*, and *Hogſty End*, in the pariſh of *Wavenden*. The Village of the latter name is ſupplied alternately from Woburn and Newport Pagnel; and *Bletchley*, near Fenny Stratford, partly from Woburn, and partly from other neighbouring places.

The Church at LEIGHTON BUZZARD had been accuſtomed to give up the labours of Mr. Wake,

their

their paſtor, for the advantage of neighbouring Villages, on the Lord's Day evenings in ſummer, and on the Lord's Day mornings in winter. A great acceſſion was made to the number of Church members and hearers at Leighton, by the Lord's bleſſing upon his labours, in ſeveral of the Villages. By the co-operation of his neighbouring brethren, and the activity of his congregation, his ſphere of uſefulneſs has been enlarged; and there are now Meetings for preaching, reading, and praying, kept up ſucceſſively at *Heath*, *Eggington*, *Great* and *Little Billington*, *Burcot*, and *Mentmore*. By aſſiſtance from a Society in London, Mr. Wake had been enabled to extend his labours to *Abbot's-Aſton*, a Village ſeven miles from Leighton; which was peculiarly in need of religious inſtruction; the Clergyman who officiated as curate, ſerving the pariſh church only once in three weeks, and ſometimes leſs often. The inhabitants attended diligently upon Mr. Wake's labours; and, on two occaſions, when theſe unavoidably claſhed with the times of public worſhip at Church, they almoſt deſerted the latter. This circumſtance provoked the Clergyman to relinquiſh the curacy; and Mr. Wake adviſed the pariſhioners to meaſures, by which Mr. Biſhop, a pious and zealous Clergyman in the neighbourhood, ſucceeded to it, with a happy proſpect of uſefulneſs. Mr. Wake then directed his own exertions to another Village, which would otherwiſe have been deſtitute of evangelical inſtruction. The bleſſing of God appears to have attended theſe meaſures in a remarkable manner.

At THORN, the neighbouring dwelling houſes being few, the attendants have conſented that their Miniſter, Mr. Davis, ſhould preach every Lord's Day morning at *Houghton*, (near Dunſtable) a populous Village where he reſides; and every ſecond Sabbath, in the evening, at one of the neighbouring places. By theſe means he now

labours

labours alternately at *Sundon* and *Wingfield*; and occasionally at TUDDINGTON. Mr. Davis has likewise opened a house at *Flamstead*, in Hertfordshire, where he preaches occasionally.

At LUTON, in the Church under the Rev. T. Pilley's care, are some Members of the Union, one of whom conducts a Meeting for prayer and reading at *Pepperstock*, a neighbouring Hamlet within the border of Hertfordshire.

A Meeting was held in the NORTH WEST District, on the 17th of November, at Olney, at the Rev. T. Hillyard's Meeting-House. Mr. W. Sampel, a member of Mr. Hillyard's Church, was chosen Treasurer of the District, and the Rev. T. P. Bull, Secretary. The Rev. J. Sutcliff, pastor of the Baptist Church at Olney, the Rev. D. Hennell of Wollaston, the Rev. J. Timson of Earl's Barton, the Rev. W. Wakefield of Cranfield, the Rev. J. Goodrich of Stony Stratford, and the Rev. T. Corbey, of the Baptist Meeting, Newport Pagnel; with Messrs. J. Hillyard, R. Morris, J. Raban, and J. Trapp, students at Mr. Bull's Academy; and Messrs. Rooth and Wallis, of the congregation at Potter's Pury, were added to the Union in this District. Meetings relative to its concerns were afterwards held at Mr. Bull's, at Newport Pagnel, and at Mr. Sutcliff's, at Olney; other places not being so conveniently circumstanced for assembling.

At OLNEY alone, Meetings for reading and prayer had been held, *previous* to the Union, in neighbouring villages, by members of Mr. Hillyard's and Mr. Sutcliff's congregations, in conjunction with some of the established Church, in which the Gospel is preached by the Rev. Melvill Horne, Vicar of Olney. These Meetings have been kept up every Lord's Day evening, at the villages of *Emberton*, *Clifton*, *Newton Blossomville*,

and

and *Turvey*; and have ſince been introduced at *Lavenden*. At all theſe places there is occaſional preaching by Members of the Union; and likewiſe at Ravenſtone and Warrington. At *Stoke Goldington*, a Lecture is preached every Lord's Day, by the united Miniſters of Olney and Newport.

Mr. Raban, who preaches ſtatedly at YARDLY, in Northamptonſhire, but reſides at Olney, ſhares with the other Miniſters in labouring at their various places, and preaches, beſides, once a month at *Denton*.

Mr. Hennell, of WOLLASTON, in the ſame county, preaches at *Bozeat*, *Great Doddington*, *Irchester*, and *Hinwick*. Prayer Meetings are alſo kept up at theſe places by Members of the Union belonging to his congregation, on thoſe Sabbaths when there is not preaching.

Mr. Timſon, of EARL'S BARTON, in the ſame county, preaches at *Wilby*, *Grundon*, *Brayfield* on the Green, *Mear's Aſhby*, *Eſton*, and *Sywell*; and, at the former three places, his congregation ſupport Meetings for prayer and reading on the vacant Sabbath evenings.

Mr. Bull, paſtor of the Independent Church at NEWPORT PAGNEL, had, by the aſſiſtance of his ſon and ſtudents, uſually ſupplied *Sherington* and *North Crawley* with Lectures every Lord's Day evening. Since the formation of the Union, the Miniſters at Newport have joined with thoſe at Olney, in ſupporting a conſtant Lecture alſo at Stoke Goldington; thoſe from Woburn, in preaching at Wavenden; and with Mr. Goodrich, in preaching every fortnight at *Loughton* and *Denshanger*, where the Goſpel has been recently introduced; as it has alſo been at *Tattle End*, in the pariſh of Hanſlope, which is ſupplied, only from Newport, every other Lord's Day afternoon.

Mr.

Mr. Corbey, paſtor of the Baptiſt Church at Newport Pagnel, dwelling at Olney, joins in preaching at ſeveral of the places ſupplied from thence. Some Members of his congregation join with Mr. Bull's, in reading and praying at the abovementioned villages, when there is no preaching.

Mr. Goodrich, paſtor of the Church at STONY STRATFORD, joins with the Miniſters and Students at Newport Pagnel, (who uſually ſupply the congregation at POTTER'S PURY, near Stony Stratford) in preaching every fortnight at Denſhanger and Loughton; and ſeveral Members of the congregations at Stratford and Pury, conduct Meetings for reading and prayer at the ſame places, on the Lord's Day evenings, when there is not preaching.

A Meeting was held, 21ſt of November, at Dr. Gordon's, ST. NEOT'S, on the concerns of the NORTH EASTERN Diſtrict. Dr. Gordon was choſen Secretary, and Mr. W. Foſter, (a Member of his Church) Treaſurer for the Diſtrict. Another Meeting was ſubſequently held at Kimbolton. The Rev. J. Manning, of Spaldwick in Huntingdonſhire, and the Rev. — Claypole, of Ruſhden in Northamptonſhire, joined the Union at theſe Meetings; but the ſituation of the latter is rather connected with the Central, or the North Weſtern Diſtrict.

There is preaching occaſionally at *Eaton Socon*, and prayer meetings are held there and at *Little Barford*, by members of Dr. Gordon's congregation at ST. NEOT'S.

Mr. Nickolls, of KIMBOLTON, preaches alſo at *Tilbrook*, *Dean*, and *Pertenhall*; and prayer meetings are conducted at the ſame places by his congregation.

Mr.

Mr. Manning, of SPALDWICK, preaches every month at *Ellington* and *Eaſton*, and prayer meetings are held at thoſe places. He preaches alſo occaſionally at *Great Catworth*.

Mr. Dickens of KEYSOE, preaches at *Swineſhead*, where alſo prayer meetings are ſupported; and occaſionally at *Riſely*, and Pertenhall abovementioned.

A Meeting was held on the 30th of November, at BEDFORD, for the CENTRAL Diſtrict, in which, as all the Miniſters, excepting one, reſide at Bedford, (including Mr. Freeman, of CARDINGTON COTTON END) they frequently conferred on the affairs of the Union, and no other Meeting was called. George Livius, Eſq; was choſen Treaſurer for the Diſtrict; and the Secretary of the *Union* dwelling on the ſpot, no other was nominated. The Rev.—Morrell, Miniſter at the third Meeting Houſe in Bedford, joined the Union; and a prayer meeting for the ſucceſs of the Goſpel was appointed, every month, in turn, at the three diſſenting places of worſhip. The Miniſters in Bedford agreed to aſſiſt each other in rendering more frequent the Lectures which had before been preached occaſionally at *Stagſden*, *Kempſton*, *Wotton*, *Elverton*, *Hawnes*, *Cardington*, *Cople*, *Willington*, *Goldington*, *Renhold*, and *Oakley*; at moſt of which places the Church Members, who reſide in theſe Villages, conduct Prayer Meetings. Houſes have ſince been opened for preaching and prayer, at *Biddenham*, *Bromham*, *Clapham*, *Harrowden*, *Milton Ernys*, and *Willſhamſtead*; of which the firſt four, as well as Kempſton, are attended by Members of the Union from Bedford, every Lord's Day evening.

Mr. Millard, of STEVENTON, occaſionally preaches at *Pavingham*, Turvey, (beforementioned) and at ſome of the Villages laſt named;

and Prayer Meetings are kept up by his congregation at Pavingham, and at Oakley.

The congregation at SHARNBROOK, lately under Mr. Grundon's charge, have joined the Union, but are at preſent without a ſettled Miniſter.

No oppoſition to the Goſpel is in general made in this Diſtrict, but much cordiality and attention every where diſcovered.

On the 5th of December, a Meeting was held, for the concerns of the SOUTH EASTERN Diſtrict, at Biggleſwade. The Rev. M. Mayle was choſen Secretary; and the Treaſurer of the *Union* reſiding in this Diſtrict, no other perſon was judged neceſſary in that department. The Rev. J. Mabbott of Biggleſwade, Rev. J. Geard of Hitchin, and Rev. J. Gamby of Southill, joined the Union. A ſubſequent Meeting was held at Blunham.

The Miniſters agreed to preach alternately at *SHEFFORD*, a market town, deſtitute of the Goſpel, once every month; and at *Henlow*, once in about two months; beſides occaſional preaching at theſe places, and alſo at *POTTON*, *Sandy*, *Roxton*, *Great Barford*, Willington, (beforementioned) *Warden*, *Ireland*, *Stanford*, *Broom*, *Langford*, *Holwell*, *Offley*, *Great Wymondly*, *Highfield*, *Preſton-Wood*, and *Coleman's Green*.

At BIGGLESWADE, a Meeting for prayer and reading has lately been introduced on Lord's Day evenings, and a Sunday School has been inſtituted by the congregation. They have alſo, in concert with Mr. Gamby's congregation at SOUTHILL, introduced Prayer Meetings at Langford and Broom.

Members of the Union at BLUNHAM have kept up Prayer Meetings, on various days of the *week*, at Roxton, Willington, and Sandy; and have introduced them, on *Lord's* Days, at the firſt and laſt named places, and at Great Barford. Occaſional preaching,

preaching, and Prayer Meetings, have alſo been introduced at *Willow Hill*, near Muggerhanger.

Mr. Geard of HITCHIN, has lately introduced the Goſpel at *Shitlington*, amidſt violent oppoſition.

The Rev. W. Pain of GAMLINGAY, preaches at *Abbot's Leigh*, *Wareſley*, and *Croydon*.

In conſequence of the communication made by Sir Egerton Leigh to the Warwickſhire and Northamptonſhire Miniſters in his neighbourhood, they met at LITTLE HARBOROUGH, on the 21ſt of November, and unanimouſly reſolved,

I. That the univerſal Union of ſerious Chriſtians, of all denominations, is highly deſirable, and ought to be attempted.

II. That this Meeting, earneſtly wiſhing to promote ſuch an Union, do approve of the general plan propoſed by our brethren at Bedford.

III. That Meſſrs. Burder, J. Edmonds, Grundy, and Knight, be a Committee to correſpond with the Bedford Union; and make their report at the next Meeting, to be held at Little Harborough on the 4th of April, 1798.

IV. That the Miniſters preſent engage to make their reſpective congregations acquainted with the propoſed Union, and endeavour to excite their attention to it.

Agreeable to one of theſe Reſolutions, another Meeting was held at the ſame place, on the day appointed; at which the Vice-Preſident of this Union attended. The plan of the Bedford Union, prefixed to the printed Sermon, was then read; and it was reſolved by the Miniſters preſent belonging to the *Warwickſhire* Aſſociation, to recommend to their brethren to adopt certain parts of the Bedford plan, in which it differed from their own; and a ſimilar Reſolution was agreed to by the Miniſters who were preſent from the Weſtern part of *Northamptonſhire*.

Sir Egerton Leigh having adopted the ſame mode of proceeding in his own neighbourhood that has been followed with ſucceſs in this county, found it practicable, by his own labours, and thoſe of ſeveral in his congregation, to ſupply almoſt daily with preaching, or reading Diſcourſes, the Villages of *Harborough*, *Lawford*, *Churchover*, *Bilton*, *Eſenhall*, *Cosford*, *Newbold*, and *Brownſover*.

In every place where this method has been uſed, the *Village Sermons*, publiſhed for the purpoſe, by the Rev. G. Burder, of Coventry, have proved peculiarly acceptable and ſerviceable.

The *Sermon*, preached at the Formation of the *Union*, was publiſhed, according to the Reſolution to that purpoſe, at the end of the year 1797. One thouſand copies were printed, and nearly one half of that number was immediately ſold within the limits of the Union.

In conſequence of the Reſolution for communication with *other* aſſociated bodies, the higheſt approbation has been expreſſed, from various quarters, of the Plan of Union adopted by us. The Secretary and Treaſurer of the Hampſhire Aſſociation, (who has alſo favoured this Unjon with valuable papers, printed for circulation in that county, and with his legal advice, upon points of importance) writes thus: " I rejoice in the ſteps you are taking for the ſpread of the Goſpel in Bedfordſhire. Your Union, indeed, goes a ſtep beyond our Aſſociation; and ſorry I am that we come even a whit behind you. I lamented always, that our Aſſociation was confined to Churches of our own ſect (Independents). It contracts the univerſality of exertions, which otherwiſe would not fail of being diffuſed in moſt places in our county. But, confined as comparatively our exertions are, the Lord has nevertheleſs owned, and bleſſed the work."

III. *Pro-*

III. *Proceedings at the ſecond General Meeting.*

Purſuant to a Reſolution of the firſt General Meeting, a ſecond was held at Bedford, on the 24th of April, 1798, which was much more numerouſly attended than the former. Public worſhip was conducted at the Old Meeting Houſe, in the forenoon, when the Rev. W. Bull preached from Acts xi. 26. and the Rev. J. Sutcliff, and J. Couſſins, (of the Northampton Methodiſt Circuit) engaged in prayer. In the afternoon, the ſecond Meeting Houſe was filled with members and friends of the Union, aſſembled for conference, among whom were nearly fifty Miniſters. The Rev. J. Geard introduced with prayer, and the Vice-Preſident having taken the chair,

It was moved, and unanimouſly reſolved,

I. That a report be made of the proceedings of the Union ſince the former General Meeting.

The Chairman having repreſented that he had been diſappointed of materials for preparing a report, through ſome delays and deficiencies in the correſpondence of the Union in its preſent ſtage, it was reſolved,

II. That the Officers of the Union, and of the Diſtricts, be requeſted to ſtate the circumſtances of which they have knowledge, reſpecting the paſt proceedings.

In conſequence of which reſolution, the Officers of the Union ſtated, what information had been communicated to them, and the meaſures that had paſſed at the ſeveral Diſtrict Meetings which they had attended. The Secretaries and Treaſurers of the reſpective Diſtricts then ſupplied the farther information that was neceſſary. From the papers furniſhed in this manner, the preceding account of the proceedings in the Diſtricts has been digeſted; Sir Egerton Leigh, who attended this Meeting,

giving an account of the proceedings at Little Harborough.

With reſpect to the outward correſpondence, and collateral events, the Chairman communicated information of the diſpoſition expreſſed toward general Union among pious people in other parts of this country, and on the Continent of Europe, and read a tranſlation from a German letter, addreſſed on the ſubject, to the Miſſionary Society of London, by a ſociety of pious people, ſpread over all the European Proteſtant nations, the central Committee of which reſides at Baſel in Switzerland. Extracts were alſo read from letters from the Rev. W. Pinnock, R. C. Brackenbury, Eſq; of Raithby Hall, Lincolnſhire, Joſeph Reyner, Eſq; London, and T. A. Minchin, Eſq; of Goſport. It appeared that ſome pious Clergymen of the eſtabliſhed Church, and the principal Miniſters of the Methodiſt connexion, were cordially diſpoſed to the advancement of Chriſtian Union; and that the Moravian brethren in our neighbourhood heartily united with us ſo far as the regulations of their Church admitted.

It was then reſolved,

III. That the Plan of Union prefixed to the publiſhed Sermon, be taken into conſideration, to be adopted, corrected, or farther improved.

IV. That a Committee be appointed, conſiſting of two Members to be choſen in each Diſtrict, and of the Officers of the Union for the time being; who ſhall meet at Bedford, the Monday before the full moon in January, April, July and October; at which times all matters which regard the intereſt and objects of the Union ſhall be tranſacted: and five of the Members ſhall conſtitute a Quorum:

V. That the thanks of the Union be given to the Preſident, Vice-Preſident, Secretary, and Treaſurer,

ſurer, for their ſervices, and that they be requeſted to continue them till the next General Meeting.

The Officers of the Union expreſſed their ſenſe of the honour done to them by their brethren, and their willingneſs to render every ſervice in their power; but the Vice-Preſident thought it neceſſary to impart, that it was probable he might ſhortly remove to the neighbourhood of London: on which it was reſolved, at the motion of the Treaſurer,

VI. That this Meeting cannot ſeparate without declaring their ſenſe of the obligations they are under to the Vice-Preſident, for the active part he has taken, in bringing forward a plan that bids fair to be productive of ſo much good, and from which ſuch benefits have already reſulted: and, fearing that the Union, but now in its infancy, may ſuſtain conſiderable diſadvantage by his removal, they moſt earneſtly requeſt, if it be poſſible, his continuance in this neighbourhood.

Reſolved, VII. That the thanks of this Meeting be given to the Preſident of the Union, for his excellent Sermon preached in the forenoon.

VIII. That a Report of the paſt proceedings of the Union be drawn up and printed, and that copies be circulated through the United Congregations.

IX. That an Addreſs to the religious Aſſociations in Great Britain be drawn up by the Vice-Preſident, and ſent to them, with the printed Report of Proceedings, after both ſhall have been reviſed and ſanctioned by the propoſed Committee.

X. That Meetings be held, as early as convenient, for the choice of two Members in each Diſtrict, to form the Committee aforeſaid.

XI. That the next General Meeting of the Union of Chriſtians be held on the Tueſday before the full moon in April, 1799, if no unforeſeen

Circumſtance ſhall poſtpone it, or ſhall require it to be held earlier. Previous notice to be given, and the public worſhip, and conference, to be arranged by the General Committee; the Rev. W. Gordon, D. D. and the Rev. J. Sutcliff being requeſted to preach on that occaſion.

The public worſhip of the evening was conducted, at the ſecond Meeting Houſe, by the Rev. T. Wake, who preached from Iſaiah liv. 17; and the Rev. A. Fuller, of Kettering, and D. Hennell, of Wollaſton, who engaged in prayer.

From the preceding details, it appears, that the number of neighbouring congregations in which there are members of the Union, is thirty-four. In ſome of theſe, all the communicants, and ſeveral other perſons of approved piety, have deſired to unite with us. The number of ſtated Miniſters in theſe congregations, who have joined the Union, is twenty-eight; beſide whom, there are ten unſettled Miniſters, Students, and other pious perſons, who preach in concert with them. About the ſame number of Miniſters alſo are correſponding Members, Subſcribers, or otherwiſe ſupporters of the Union. About 150 active and zealous perſons, belonging to the United Congregations, conduct Meetings for Prayer, and for reading evangelical Diſcourſes, in the Villages, at ſeaſons when their Miniſters are elſewhere engaged. By theſe means nearly 100 towns, villages, or populous hamlets, beſide thoſe in which the Miniſters are ſettled, are furniſhed with opportunities of devotion and religious inſtruction, moſt of them ſtatedly, and many of them every Lord's Day.

In conſtructing the foregoing Report, mention has been made only of the Miniſters, and Congregations that are united together. Several of

the places, to which their exertions have ſpread, are, at times, attended by Miniſters of other connexions; who alſo labour at thirty-five, or more places, beſide theſe, within the ſame extent of country. This number includes the places viſited by the Methodiſt Miniſters of the Bedford and Northamptonſhire Circuits; and thoſe ſtated congregations, belonging to the Eſtabliſhment, or to different denominations of Diſſenters, which enjoy the labours of evangelical Miniſters; together with the places where they occaſionally preach, ſo far as we have acquired information of them.

We cordially rejoice that Chriſt is preached, whether by perſons who follow him with us, or by others, at ſo many places in this country. In ſome parts of it, very few of the Villages are deſtitute of ſpiritual advantages; but, upon an average, not above one half of thoſe which are ſcattered over the country here ſpoken of, are as yet viſited with the preaching of the Croſs. Notwithſtanding exertions have ſo greatly increaſed ſince the formation of the Union, that the ſeaſons of public worſhip are, in ſome vicinities twice, in others three times as numerous as they were, much evidently remains yet unattempted. Where we have not the means of introducing the Goſpel, we have only to lament the deficiency; but if any of us, who have houſes where it might be preached, are induced, by the love, or the fear of the world, to ſhut our doors againſt it, Woe be unto us!

In cloſing this Report, brethren, we would earneſtly recommend to you a conduct that ſhall adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. Pray without ceaſing, for his bleſſing on the good work in which we are engaged. Bear with each other's infirmities in jointly promoting it. By your mutual affection, give full proof that it is not the appearance and form of Union, but its ſpirit and

power,

power, that we cultivate. Guard againſt cenſuring them who decline to join with us. Reſpect all who act conſcientiouſly. Love all who love Chriſt. Let not your good be evil ſpoken of. Let none undertake to hold forth to others the word of life, but thoſe whoſe conduct proves that they have received it into their own hearts. Be mindful of the important influence which your behaviour, in civil and temporal concerns, will have upon the honour and the ſucceſs of the bleſſed Redeemer's cauſe, in which we have jointly engaged! The God of peace be with you!

Signed on behalf of the Committee of Union,

WILLIAM GORDON, Chairman.

BEDFORD,
23d of *July*, 1798.

Report

Report from the Treaſurer of the Union of Chriſtians formed at Bedford, of Collections, Subſcriptions, and Donations, received by him, alphabetically arranged.

	£.	s.	d.
Abbott, William, St. Neot's -	0	10	6
Arrowſmith, Joſeph, Newport Pagnel	1	1	0
Barton (Earl's) Northamptonſhire, Collection	1	11	6
Bedford, Old Meeting, Collection -	12	8	7½
Bodger, Richard, Southill -	1	1	0
Bull, Rev. William, Newport Pagnel	2	2	0
—— Rev. T. P. ditto	1	1	0
Burkitt, Rev. Thomas, Bedford -	1	1	0
Brackenbury, Richard C. Eſq; Raithby Hall, Lincolnſhire - -	5	5	0
Chaſe, late Mrs. E. Luton -	1	1	0
Cranfield, Bedfordſhire, Collection	0	7	6
Cripps, Joſeph, Newport Pagnel -	1	1	0
Davis, Rev. R. Houghton Regis	0	10	6
Foſter, John, Biggleſwade -	5	5	0
Foſter, Mrs. ditto - -	2	2	0
Foſter, John, Holwell, near Hitchin	1	1	0
Foſter, William, St. Neot's -	5	5	0
Freeman, Rev. William, Bedford	1	1	0
A Friend (in the North Eaſtern Diſtrict)	1	1	0
Gamlingay, Cambridgeſhire, Collection	2	11	0
Geard, Rev. John, Hitchin -	0	10	6
Gordon, Rev. Dr. William, St. Neot's	1	1	0
Greatheed, Rev. Samuel, Newport Pagnel	5	5	0
Greatheed, Mrs. ditto -	2	2	0
Greig, Mr. Southwark - -	2	0	0
Griffin, Mr. Thrapſtone -	1	1	0

Handſcomb,

	£.	s.	d.
Handſcomb, J. H. Newport Pagnel	1	1	0
Hennell, Rev. David, Wollaſton -	1	1	0
Hillyard, Rev. Samuel, Bedford -	1	1	0
Hogg, Rev. Reynold, Thrapſtone	1	1	0
Horne, Rev. Melvill, Olney -	1	1	0
Inkerſole, William, St. Neot's -	1	1	0
Inwood, Jethro, Newport Pagnel -	1	1	0
Keyſoe, Bedfordſhire, Collection -	2	5	0
Kilpin, Thomas, Newport Pagnel	1	1	0
Kimbolton, Huntingdonſhire, Collection	6	14	6
Leigh, Sir Egerton, Bart. Little Harborough, Warwickſhire - -	5	5	0
Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordſhire, Collections	3	10	0
Livius, George, Eſq; Bedford -	5	5	0
Mabbott, Rev. T. Biggleſwade -	1	1	0
Malden, John, ditto -	1	1	0
Manning, Rev. J. Spaldwick -	0	2	0
Mayle, Rev. Martin, Blunham -	0	10	6
Millard, Rev. J. Steventon -	0	5	0
Neale, Miſs, Luton - -	0	10	6
Neale, Miſs H. ditto - -	0	10	6
Neot's, St. Huntingdonſhire, Collection at Independent Meeting (excluſive of Subſcriptions) - -	3	10	0
Newport Pagnel, Buckinghamſhire, ditto at ditto (excluſive of Subſcriptions)	4	10	4
Olney, Buckinghamſhire, ditto at ditto (excluſive of Subſcription) -	5	0	5½
Palmer, Rev. Samuel, Hackney -	1	1	0
Pawſey, John, Newport Pagnel -	1	1	0
Pilley, Rev. John, Luton -	0	10	6
Pinnock, Rev. William, Fenny Stratford	0	2	6
Preſton, Thomas, Southill -	0	10	6
Raban, Rev. Thomas, Olney -	1	1	0
Reyner, Joſeph, Eſq; London -	5	5	0
Ridgemount, Bedfordſhire, Collection	2	4	2
Rogers, Thomas, Newport Pagnel	0	10	6

	£.	s.	d.
Sampel, Wiliam, Olney -	1	1	0
Saville, Joſeph, St. Neot's -	0	10	6
Scroxton, Rev. John, late of Woburn	0	11	0
Southill, Bedfordſhire, Collection (excluſive of Subſcriptions) - -	1	7	11
Street, Mr. Blunham - -	1	1	0
Sutcliff, Rev. John, Olney -	1	1	0
Thorn, Bedfordſhire, Collection -	1	13	6
Wallis, George, Stony Stratford -	0	10	6
Webſter, Joſeph, St. Neot's -	0	10	6
Weſt, Samuel, Biggleſwade -	0	10	6
Wilſon, Samuel, ditto -	1	1	0
Woburn, Bedfordſhire, Collection -	11	3	9

The Treaſurer of the Union of Chriſtians formed at Bedford,

Dr.	Cr.	£.	s.	d.
23d July, 1798, To amount of Collections, &c. as above £.140 13 9	By Expenſes in Central Diſtrict -	4	12	11
	North Weſtern do.	1	10	6
	South Weſtern do.	7	5	9
	South Eaſtern do.	0	10	0
	North Eaſtern do.	3	18	6
	To Balance in hand	122	16	1
	£.140	13	9	